

Pastoral Care of the Sick and Dying

Parishioners may contact the rectory and notify a priest in case of serious illness or hospitalization. The Sacraments of Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation are celebrated in the case of a serious illness or surgery. Holy Communion may also be arranged for the sick and homebound. St. Michael's parishioners serve as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the sick and homebound within our parish. The Catholic priest at Lahey Hospital and the Catholic chaplain at Emerson coordinate Communion to the patients upon request. Saint Michael's also provides pastoral and sacramental care to the nearby senior centers and nursing care facilities.

Anointing of the Sick

One of the most humbling experiences for a priest is to be called to the bedside of one who is sick, to minister the Sacrament of the Sick or what was formerly known as the Extreme Unction (Last Rites). Understandably, this can be a very stressful time, but it is also a sacred time where the peace of Christ shines through our human weakness. Jesus, the Divine Physician, once again reaches out his healing hand to touch the sick and bring them comfort and strength through the Sacrament of the Sick. The priest—acting in the Person of Christ the High Priest—lays hands on the head of the sick person and then anoints them with sacred oil blessed by the Bishop and sent to every parish in the diocese. These outward signs are accompanied by the promised grace of the Holy Spirit to bring healing of body and soul. The priest prays from the Bible passage of the Letter of James, which states. “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters (priests) of the Church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5: 14-15)

The sacraments are only given to those who are alive. Once the person has died, the priest can only offer prayers of commendation for the dead and remember the beloved at Mass. If you or a loved one is seriously ill, please contact the priest sooner rather than later about ministering the Sacrament of the Sick. The current decline in clergy makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to arrive prior to death. Often, the priest may be celebrating Mass or hearing confession and get the emergency message too late to respond in a helpful timeframe. In days past, one could dedicate a priest's entire duty to just being on emergency call, but with limited priests serving today, this is no longer the case. The sooner the request is made for the sacrament, the more likely it can be received in a helpful timeframe.

The Letter of James states that the sick are to be anointed in order to raise them up and save them. The Church takes great care and concern that those of the faithful whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age receive this sacrament.

- A sick person may be anointed before surgery whenever a serious illness is the reason for surgery.
- Elderly people may be anointed if they become notably weakened even though no serious illness is present.
- Sick children may be anointed if they have sufficient use or reason to be strengthened by this sacrament.
- The faithful should be educated to ask for the sacrament of anointing and to receive it with full faith and devotion.

The Sacrament of anointing may be repeated:

- When a sick person recovers after being anointed and, at a later time, becomes sick again.
- When during the same illness the condition of the sick person becomes more serious.

Anyone who will undergo general anesthesia should be anointed along with individuals undergoing chemotherapy or renal dialysis. As a rule, the sacrament may be repeated every three months as long as the serious condition remains or sooner if the person's condition deteriorates.

Routine reception of the Sacrament of the Anointing is to be avoided. If one is in doubt of eligibility for the sacrament, a priest should be consulted. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is offered any time upon request or can be done following Mass either during the week or on the weekend. Please contact the Parish 781-275-6318.